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ABSTRACT

Klein's conceptual framework of curriculum decision making is applied to the site-based decision making process in a suburban California school district. The model is composed of two interacting dimensions: participants at different levels and curriculum elements. Three levels of decision making--formal, institutional, and instructional--are examined in conjunction with curriculum elements. The triangularized methodology includes observation, document analysis, and interviews with seven administrators and seven teachers. Findings indicate that the context of curriculum decision making is dominated by the state curriculum framework at all three participatory levels. The dominance and acceptance of the state's role and district reinforcement tended to preclude teacher empowerment. Teachers cited lack of time as the major barrier to effective decision making. They generally had limited control over most of the nine curriculum elements, but expressed satisfaction with their roles. A final recommendation is that faculty at the instructional level must have the necessary skills and resources to implement change in curriculum design and development. Figures illustrate the hierarchy of the decision making process and of goals and objectives, and Klein's framework of decision making. (21 references) (LMI)

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A Study of Curriculum Decision Making in a Time of Site-Based Management

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Early in the decade of the 1980's a new era of curriculum reform began in which significant changes were proposed, and many were actually implemented in the schools. Reform was linked to the need to increase student achievement so that this nation would be able to remain economically competitive with other developed nations of the world. The reform was fueled by a series of reports on the conditions of public schooling (see for example A Nation At Risk, National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983 and Goodlad, 1984) which supported a perception held by the general public that the schools were in need of dramatic improvement. Many of the reports were based upon research which indicated that classroom practices were fostering neither the goals of the nation nor of education.

One of the responses to these reports about schooling was an increase in curriculum decision making at the state level - more centralized decisions made further away from teachers and students (Klein, in press b). Goals and objectives were established at the state level; instructional materials were adopted or recommended; guides and frameworks were produced to direct the curriculum implementation efforts of the local district; testing programs were instituted or expanded to track the achievement of students; and district curriculum documents were written to help teachers implement the state's expectations. This shift in curriculum decision making occurred with the

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acquiescence at least, if not the expressed approval of local districts (Pipho, in press).

The reform and centralization of curriculum decision making emphasized such curricular practices as higher expectations for students, more rigorous courses, more academic courses required for graduation, increased testing of students, more time on the tasks of learning, increased amounts of homework, and teacher-directed classrooms (Klein, in press b). Educators in local districts found themselves responding to state mandates rather than developing curricula which met the needs and desires of their students and communities. Although districts were presumably encouraged to use the state mandates as guidelines for local decisions and practices, more often the school districts responded with enforced implementation of state guidelines. Local educators felt very constrained by the state guidelines and accountability efforts (Brooks, in press).

The pendulum of reform is now moving from the centralization of decision making about educational policies to one of decentralization (McNeil, 1985). The new movement is toward site-based management where administrators and teachers have greater power over decision making. In site-based management teachers, administrators, and parents at the local school make important decisions about the education of their students through increased authority, autonomy, flexibility, and allocation of resources to the individual school.

Along with site-based management, teacher empowerment is a rallying cry of educators in this wave of educational reform.

Teachers are expected to have greater authority over educational decisions affecting them. The empowerment of teachers is supported by prestigious scholars identifying the local school as the key unit for school improvement (Finn, 1984; Goodlad, 1984 and Kirst, 1988). As a part of teacher empowerment, teachers are expected to be curriculum decision makers rather technicians who implement a curriculum planned at distances far from their classrooms. (For an explanation of how these roles change, see Griffin, in press). This shift in roles is a significant one for which teachers must be prepared if they are to function well. The degree to which they are prepared to engage in curriculum decision making, however, is a topic which has been receiving considerable discussion in the literature (Klein, 1985; and Griffin, in press).

Some research suggests that teachers are in accordance with an expanded role in curriculum decision making because of its relationship to their classroom teaching (Young, 1988). Other research, however, suggests that most curriculum decisions at the site level are made by the principal, although with considerable input from teachers. There is a tendency, however, in smaller schools for the locus of decision making to be in the classroom (Kimpston and Anderson, 1982). Parents and students were generally not included in decision making. The larger the school district, the more centralization of curriculum decision making occurred (Kimpston and Anderson, 1986). In this wave of reform, school districts are increasingly expected to employ systematic procedures with a broader base of professional involvement in curriculum development (Kimpston and Rogers, 1987).

This study investigated site-based curriculum decision making in a suburban school district in Southern California. The opportunity for the study occurred when the decision was made by the school board to build and open a new elementary school in September 1989. The new school was to have a unique architectural design so that it could be easily converted into condominiums for senior citizens in the event that the building no longer is needed as a school. The school district consisted of ten other schools and had a reputation for being innovative and very concerned about curriculum matters. The school board appointed the principal of the new school during February 1989, and gave him the freedom to select the faculty for the new school.

These events presented a natural laboratory for studying curriculum decision making where it would be a central focus and where considerable freedom would be given to the faculty to plan and implement curriculum. The authors requested and obtained approval to conduct a study of the context and substance of curriculum decisions made by the faculty.

Because one of the authors was a well-known and highly respected teacher in the district, there was extensive cooperation throughout the study. The study began in February 1989, and lasted throughout the remainder of 1989. Since the school was on a year-round schedule, the end of the data collection period corresponded to the end of the second quarter of the school year. This was selected as the cut-off point because by that time most of the curriculum plan would be

expected to be in place, and some sense of the degree of satisfaction with their curriculum decision making could be obtained.

As a conceptual framework the investigators used the Klein framework for curriculum decision making (Klein, in press a). The framework consists of a matrix of two interacting dimensions. One dimension identifies potential or actual decision makers categorized into seven different perspectives or levels: the academic which consists of the scholars at colleges and universities; the social which consists of such groups as parents, legislators, leaders of the community, and special interest groups such as religious groups, business and industry leaders, and political groups; the formal group which is comprised of groups and individuals who have some delegated or assumed responsibility to make curriculum decisions such as state educational agencies, local school boards and district educators, and textbook publishers; the institutional which consists of all the curriculum development efforts at the site level such as departmental and administrative decisions, grade-level planning, and curriculum policies made by the faculty for the entire school; the instructional level which consists of the teacher's expectations, planning, and views of the curriculum; the operational which is the interactive or unfolding curriculum which occurs when the teacher and students interact with the substance of the curriculum; and the experiential curriculum which is the feelings about and the view and success of the student(s) with the curriculum. Curriculum decisions can, and often are made by groups or individuals at these different levels

or perspectives.

The types of curriculum decisions in which these various participants engage is the second dimension of the conceptual framework. It identifies nine elements of curriculum decision making: goals, objectives, or purposes for learning; content to be learned; materials and resources to be used with students; activities in which students are to engage as they learn the content of the curriculum; teaching strategies that teachers employ to facilitate student learning; evaluation tools and procedures used to document student learning; grouping practices in the schools and classrooms; and allocation of time and utilization of space. A diagram of the conceptual framework is presented as Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here.

The various possible participants identified in the first dimension of the framework can potentially make decisions regarding any of the nine curriculum elements for any given curriculum, although they typically are involved with only selected ones. The impact of the curriculum upon the students is increased when the decisions made by all of the participants about the curriculum elements are compatible within any given curriculum.

This study examined three perspectives or levels of curriculum decision making in depth: the formal by examining the state and district curriculum documents, the expectations and policies of the top administrators in the district, and formal board actions regarding the curriculum; the institutional through

Figure 1

Curriculum Framework for Decision Making

Perspectives or Levels of Decision Making \ Curriculum Elements	Goals, Purposes, Objectives	Content	Materials, Resources	Activities	Teaching Strategies	Evaluation	Grouping	Time	Space
Academic									
Societal									
Formal									
Institutional									
Instructional									
Operational									
Experiential									

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interviews with the principal, a journal kept by the principal, and observations of groups of teachers as they engaged in institutional curriculum planning; and the instructional through teacher interviews as they individually extended their curriculum planning for their classrooms and implemented the plans with their students.

The following research questions guided the investigation:

1. What was the context for curriculum development when the faculty discussed, made, and implemented curriculum decisions?
2. To what extent and in what ways were the nine curriculum elements of curriculum design addressed in their discussions and decision making?
3. What sources of support and what barriers were identified in their curriculum discussions, decision making, and implementation?
4. To what degree were the participants satisfied with the results of their curriculum discussions, decision making, and implementation?

Data Collection Procedures

The researchers requested permission to conduct the study by contacting the superintendent of the school district. When permission was granted, the principal was contacted and his agreement to participate was obtained. Each teacher in the study was then contacted individually and asked to participate in the study. Those included in the study eventually included two school board members, the superintendent of the district, the assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, the architect of the school, the principal of the new school, and

seven teachers. The teachers were all experienced teachers who had agreed to join the faculty of the new school and participate in planning meetings before the opening of the school. One experienced teacher declined to participate in the study.

Research procedures were based upon those recommended in the literature on qualitative case study methodology (Merriam, 1988; Miles and Huberman, 1984; and Patton, 1980). They included triangulation of data from individual interviews with district personnel, the principal, and the teachers; observations of faculty meetings and other school functions; and analyses of documents which contained information about curriculum development. Two types of interviews were conducted: a structured interview focusing specifically upon the research questions and informal conversations which reflected unstructured opportunities to collect data for the study. Although the structured interviews focused upon the research questions of the study, the process was deliberately kept flexible so that the interviewees felt free to express themselves in personal and unique ways. The interviewer's demeanor was at all times respectful, non-judgmental, and sensitive to what the interviewees said and how they expressed themselves. Rapport with the interviewees was easily established and maintained as the interviewer was a well-known peer.

Each of the teachers was interviewed at least twice, once at the beginning of the study and once toward the end. The interviews were conducted at the convenience of the teachers, frequently in the late afternoon. The length of the interviews

ranged from 40 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes.

One of the investigators met at least bi-weekly with the principal and a journal concerning activities and events related to the school was kept during these meetings. In conjunction with this, the principal's calendar was studied and linked with the journal. These became important sources of data.

Observations were made of all faculty meetings which were held once a week for approximately two hours and of teachers' planning sessions. These meetings were recorded, transcribed, and systematically analyzed for data pertaining to the topics of investigation. In addition, the researcher had several informal tours of the school, and attended a back-to-school night during which teachers explained their curricula to parents. The researcher also attended a school dedication ceremony in which persons from the formal level of decision making discussed goals for the school.

Documents reviewed for the study included formal curriculum guides from the state and other curriculum documents such as textbooks as well as a videotape of the school. Also included as data sources were school board minutes, letters from the principal, and faculty meeting agendas. The documents were analyzed for any content relating to the topics of the study, and the content was then transferred to a document summary form.

Findings

This section reports data about the basic research questions which guided this investigation. The questions included what the context was of curriculum decision making for the faculty, to what extent and how the nine basic curriculum elements of

curriculum design were addressed, what barriers and facilitators were encountered in the processes of curriculum development, and the degree of satisfaction expressed by the participants regarding the processes and results of their curriculum planning and implementation.

Context of Curriculum Decision Making

The context of curriculum decision making was dominated by the state curriculum frameworks. The faculty was expected to and did consider the state frameworks in all subject areas as the basic tool in curriculum decision making. This consideration was pervasive at the formal level with the superintendent and assistant superintendent, at the institutional level with the principal and groups of teachers as they met to discuss curriculum matters, and at the instructional level as individual teachers engaged in planning the curriculum for their classroom. In the words of the assistant superintendent:

> We ask, what do we need to implement the framework? From this we derive, through the district curriculum committee, district goals. Site grade-level teachers give information regarding appropriate enabling objectives for each goal. The curriculum committee then selects and writes basic enabling objectives for each district goal. Each principal and his/her staff then develop an action plan including resources, materials, strategies, activities and supporting objectives to meet the district goals and enabling objectives.

The principal also stated:

> We start with the framework. We look at the curriculum as a staff, and decide what material is needed to blend with the state framework.

The teachers concurred. In the words of one teacher:

> I feel that in this district the framework is the strongest element because even though you do have some choice of materials, many of those materials are chosen by a committee

who say they (materials) help us to teach all that is in the framework. The district office gives us ideas to implement the framework. We decide how we want to do it. District guidelines are written from state guidelines.

There was a clear hierarchy of curriculum decision making starting with the state and then flowing to the district to the principal, and to the teachers. This hierarchy is demonstrated in Figure 2.

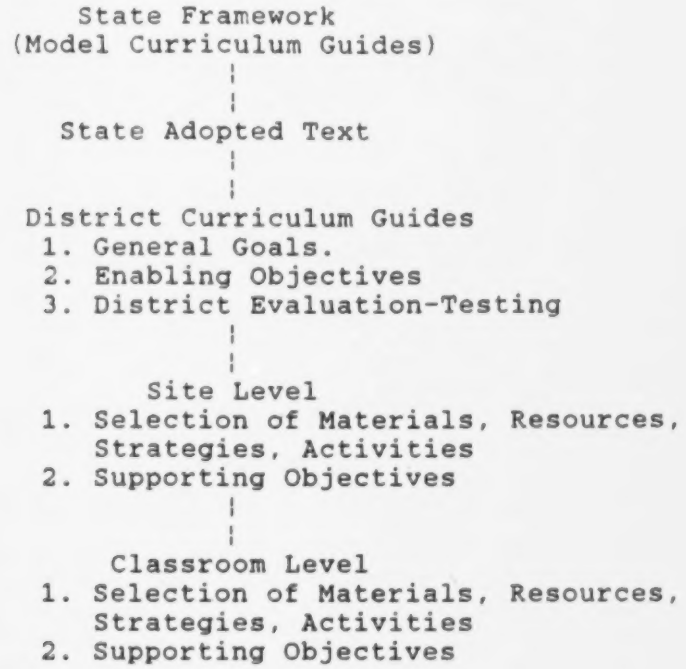
Insert Figure 2 about here.

The hierarchy of curriculum decision making was also reflected in a district master plan which according to the superintendent included identifying enabling objectives in every content area, providing resources such as mentor teachers and textbooks needed to teach the objectives, providing district-wide support for teachers to develop the instructional methodologies necessary to implement the objectives, and developing evaluation processes which included a testing program to determine the progress of students.

Site decision making was perceived as a collegial, participatory process with the principal operating as the instructional leader. The faculty participated primarily in decisions regarding supporting objectives, materials and resources, learning activities, and teaching strategies. In the words of the superintendent, "The nitty-gritty type things are done on the site level." All of the participants discussed instructional decisions, the curriculum element of teaching strategies, as the type of decisions made at the site level. As one teacher expressed it, "We meet as a staff to decide how to use the reading series.... The reading series was chosen because

Figure 2

Hierarchy of Curriculum Decision-Making



of its close ties with the framework." Only one teacher was the exception to this view. She stated, "Everything comes down from the district pretty much, what we are going to be doing."

The selection of materials and resources was also particularly emphasized at the institutional level as evidenced by early entries in the principal's journal and opening staff meetings. The principal stated to the faculty, "If there is anything you need and have not ordered, see me and I'll get it for you." It should be noted that the district was generous in making moneys available to equip the new school. The principal was a capable budget manager who planned purchases early, involved staff in the selection of materials to some degree, and supervised the process of material distribution.

Teachers, however, did not refer to any budgetary allocations for materials in their discussions. They seemed to defer to the administration in attending to the moneys for materials and resources. Despite these assets, the availability of materials and resources was a struggle for the teachers. This will be discussed further in a later section.

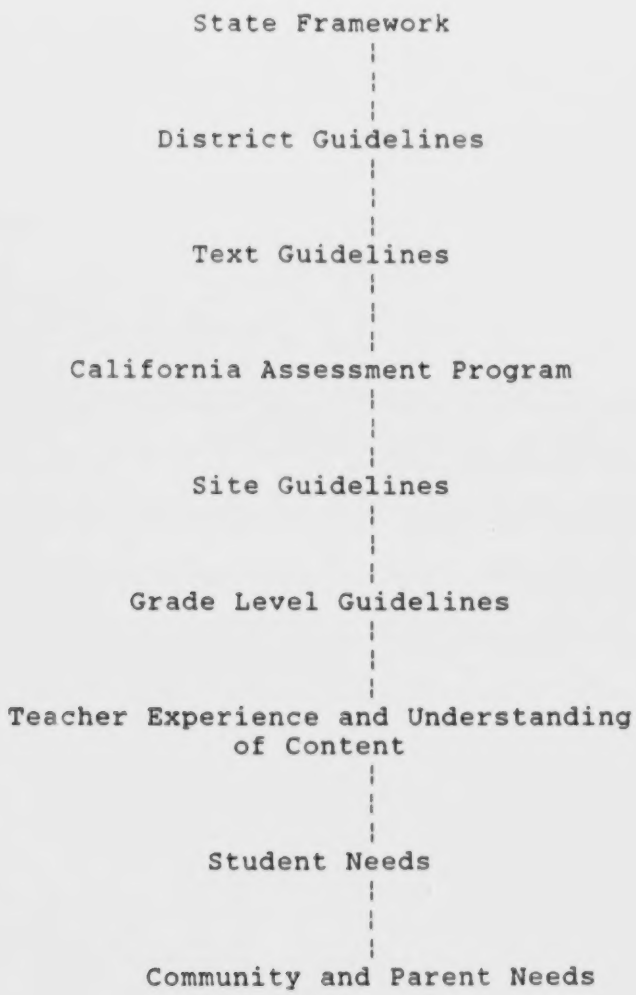
Elements of Curriculum Planning and Implementation

Goals, Objectives, and Purposes. The state frameworks were the source of goals and objectives. This was true in the perceptions of all the participants in the study at the formal, institutional, and instructional levels. Through the observations and interviews, a hierarchy of sources for goals and objectives became apparent. This is summarized in Figure 3.

Insert Figure 3 about here.

Within this hierarchy, however, there were some perceived

Figure 3. Hierarchy of sources, of goals and objectives.



degrees of freedom. For example, the assistant superintendent said, "The district says the principal and staff are professional enough to come up with an action plan and materials to accomplish the general goals and objectives of the district." Teachers met by grade levels to develop long-range goals and objectives to support the district guidelines and a plan for implementation. One teacher stated, "The district guidelines are just that - guides. They are not written in blood. It's a guideline to help the teacher get a focus." Another teacher said, "I think more and more the teachers are making the decisions and not just following the curriculum guide. Teachers have a lot of freedom to choose what we would like to emphasize." At this level of planning the needs and interests of the student and the desires of the parents and the community finally became a focal point for discussion. A sixth-grade teacher explained, "State-adopted texts don't always meet the needs of students at either end of the spectrum. We need latitude in choosing curriculum for them."

Content. Content as an element of curriculum planning and implementation was derived from the state frameworks, textbooks, and district documents. The superintendent made clear that the content should be "tied to the framework, tied to district objectives, and tied to the text." This linkage was reflected in the answers of all the other participants. At the institutional level, however, the principal noted, "We need to look at the student for content. What do we need to add? What do we need to change to meet the needs of students in the class?"

Content in the minds of most teachers was the textbook. The texts, of course, were selected to reflect as closely as possible the state frameworks. Hence, the tie to the state frameworks was strengthened through the manipulation of this curriculum element.

Materials and Resources. This element of curriculum decision making and implementation was very clearly considered to be a site-based decision. The assistant superintendent stated, "Teachers are well-educated and can pick the best materials for their classrooms." Even then, however, the superintendent made clear that they were to match the state frameworks; all the elements of curriculum planning were to be in alignment with the frameworks.

As noted in previous discussions, the principal was very involved in decisions about selecting and ordering materials for the teachers, and was very committed to having teachers involved to some degree in selecting their own materials. In the words of the principal:

> If I give teachers involvement in the selection process, they will use the materials. We select for classrooms according to their needs by grade level; we purchase for all. We have no existing materials to add onto; therefore, we have grade level meetings to determine our needs. We have a new school so we need to project over three years and order materials. Perhaps the next new school will use us as a model.

From the day of his appointment the principal reflected this deep concern about ordering materials for the new school. With the exception of two meetings, however, the principal worked alone. He ordered all supplementary materials and kits suggested by textbook publishers in all content areas. Using these as a base, he ordered all other materials he thought would be necessary for a well-equipped classroom. During the spring he

met with teachers, and asked them to develop "wish lists" of additional materials they would like to have.

The wealth of materials was a source of great satisfaction for teachers at the instructional level. In the words of one teacher, "For a brand-new school, this one is outstanding in materials! I have never had so much given to me at one time."

Activities. One topic of discussion regarding learning activities was possible sources of ideas for designing or selecting activities. Sources identified tended to be people within the district. As the superintendent noted, "The site personnel can get assistance from the curriculum committee, the district staff development committee, the mentor teacher, the learning specialist, and district resource people such as the teachers on special assignment." Similarly, the principal said of the teachers that after they consider the ability range of their students, "They then consider the materials available, courses and inservices they have attended, ideas from other teachers, or commercially prepared activities."

Teachers were considered by all participants to have the primary responsibility for selecting learning activities. One teacher reflected this:

> I teach the content in the district guides and texts. I shoot for the objectives so they will get the scores. But the way I teach and the activities are up to me. Therefore, I emphasize nonpaper and pencil activities. I call this brain activities as opposed to no brainers. If it's mandated that I have to use eight skill masters for each story, I'll do it. I feel we're going toward using our professional judgment. I'd like to think I could decide not to do something I don't think is valuable.

Teaching Strategies. At the formal level, the

superintendent gave great emphasis to helping teachers develop a repertoire of teaching strategies. He stated:

> The critical issue for our schools is how to work smarter, not harder. I think the way to get there is through objectives-based instruction. That will involve training teachers how to orchestrate in their classroom from objectives rather than from textbooks.... I don't think our teachers are there yet. The only way they are going to get there is if we support them to get there. So to me that's the challenge that we face.

This view, however, was not shared by participants at the other levels of curriculum decision making. The superintendent was new, and his priority for teaching strategies had not yet been fully understood by others in the district.

The principal and the teachers reported a number of sources for selecting teaching strategies: teachers on special assignments, district staff development programs, publishers, and conferences. Teachers also emphasized that they observed their students before selecting teaching strategies. The views of the teachers consistently reflected the findings of Lieberman and Miller (1984) that the primary characteristic of their teaching strategies was practicality. As one teacher noted, "I choose what works. I talk to other teachers and get ideas so my strategies can change, but I always choose what works." Another teacher reported:

> The district would like us to use the clinical teaching strategy, but I can't use the seven steps in every lesson. I like to try different strategies to see what works with different students. I try strategies with small groups, the whole class, and with individual students.

The superintendent, then, saw teaching strategies as tools to assist teachers in becoming masters of the process of teaching. Teachers, by contrast, viewed teaching strategies from a very

practical standpoint of using in an eclectic way anything that worked with their students. These two different views would not necessarily lead to the same degree of skill on the part of the teachers or toward their increased empowerment.

Evaluation. The focus for the formal level of planning was on testing as a form of evaluation with an emphasis on national norms. As stated by the assistant superintendent, "We're researching and asking, do we need more national norms. We're discussing getting more people from outside to assist in testing and evaluation. There will be a more outside and national focus coming up." This emphasis was also clearly reflected in the superintendent's remarks about evaluation. The ideas at the formal level also included program evaluation as a site responsibility.

The principal, however, emphasized criterion-referenced tests of the district as being more valid and valuable. He stated:

> We can use criterion-referenced tests as teaching tools because they are related to our objectives. We also have more teacher buy-in with criterion-referenced tests because teachers write the objectives. We can't use national tests as teaching tools, and teachers don't buy into them.

He also noted that the faculty used publisher-developed tests in many content areas, and that teachers also developed many of their own tests.

The teachers' view of evaluation was more comprehensive and included procedures other than just tests. One teacher noted that he was constantly evaluating, both student progress and his own teaching abilities. Most teachers referred to the tests which were coordinated with the state frameworks, but they also reported the use of daily assessments and teacher observation as

evaluation tools. One teacher said, "You use your own judgment. I used my judgment, and took my class further than the book would have taken them." They also reported using student projects, oral presentations, quick quizzes, visual checks using small chalkboards, and many other techniques for informal assessment and decision making. Thus, evaluation at the institutional and instructional levels was viewed as a tool to examine student progress and to determine student instructional needs. They also saw program evaluation as important in making decisions and changes in the curriculum.

Grouping. In keeping with the changes in the state frameworks, there was a clear movement from ability grouping to more flexible grouping patterns. Both the superintendent and the assistant superintendent noted this shift and supported it.

The principal's view of grouping made a distinct shift during the study. In the beginning of the school year he insisted that teachers use reading cards from the previous year as a basis for placing students in ability groups. Later in the semester, the principal read with the different groups to "validate the groupings."

Teachers, however, continued to discuss this approach to grouping and the contradiction it presented to what was reflected in the state reading and language arts framework. They requested help from a number of sources such as district teachers on special assignment and publisher representatives. The latter resource, in particular, was a turning point in the move toward flexible, heterogeneous grouping.

The teachers' view of grouping was also based on their perceptions of student needs as well as on other criteria for grouping. One teacher said:

> I have many criteria for grouping. I look at things such as physical maturity, following directions, social maturity, academic tests, previous years' data, text placement tests, daily work, extemporaneous reading assignments, attention span, work habits, organizational skills, and many other criteria. I use many sources because some kids choke on tests. I test several times for groupings until I get consistent results, then I form groups.

Time. Participants at the formal level were not overly involved with allocation of time except for state-determined subject area requirements. The principal, also aware of state-determined allocations, was concerned with pacing. He devised pacing skill charts for all subject areas for teachers to use in achieving a global view of their curriculum. He hoped this would help the teachers on the same grade level stay together as they taught the content of the curriculum.

This concern of the principal for pacing, however, was not mentioned frequently by the teachers at the instructional level. Although they were concerned with state-mandated time allocations, they expressed freedom in allocating classroom time throughout the week. Time was allocated and apportioned by teachers in all of the content areas. Students were an important factor in time allocation for teachers. As one teacher stated, "The student needs help [to] determine how time is spent....I spend time wisely. I'm constantly in a point of shifting activities trying to get everybody on target."

Time was the topic of many staff meetings as extra schedules had to be arranged for the computer lab, library, art, music, and

physical education. As would be expected, teachers found it necessary to plan their daily and weekly schedules around these fixed ones at the school level.

Space. This element of curriculum planning and implementation was not discussed at the formal level. This may have been due to the fact that the school had just been built, and was designed with wings or pods of four classrooms in each one. Space was flexible so that the school could be converted into senior citizen housing should it no longer be needed as a school. Decisions about space had been made at the formal level in advance of this study.

The principal, however, was very concerned with space allocation, design, color, furniture, learning centers, traffic patterns, and other such elements of space. This concern lasted through even the exit interview with him.

Teachers viewed space through the needs of the curriculum and students. Several teachers reported using many furniture configurations, but ultimately decided upon traditional rows of desks for purposes of classroom management and control. Several teachers were also concerned that the classrooms were quite small and made some activities difficult.

Sources of Support for and Barriers to Curriculum Decision Making

Four sources of support for curriculum development were noted in the interviews. The primary and most often referred to by all participants to was teachers on special assignment for the district. Each of these resource teachers represented a specialization in a different subject area. They were fresh from

the classroom, and they were perceived as teachers, not as administrators or curriculum specialists. Thus, teachers saw them as "one of their own" and respected them for their knowledge and strategical advice in their area of speciality. Their assistance was considered to be helpful, practical, and useful. One teacher said, "I've used the district teachers, and anytime I've gone to them, they've been more than helpful."

The quality of the teachers themselves was viewed as a second source of support. Throughout his journal the principal made references to the expertise of the teachers. He also reported in an interview having a core of recognized, experienced teachers to whom the new teachers could go for support, and he deliberately paired each of the novice teachers with one of the experienced ones. The teachers also reported that they viewed the other teachers at the school as sources of support. Many of the faculty came from California Distinguished Schools who had been involved with exemplary programs, and thus, had considerable expertise and high standards for their own performances.

A third source of support acknowledged by the teachers was the principal. A few noted some reluctance, however, to go to him with their problems since it might suggest they had some weaknesses. Publisher representatives was a fourth source of support, and were noted as a source of support in the preceding discussion of several of the curriculum elements.

Two major barriers to curriculum decision making were noted by teachers: a lack of understanding of the new state framework in reading and language arts and some confusion encountered when

the publisher delivered the textbooks late because of heavy market demands from school districts. Over the course of this study, teachers did become more familiar with the state framework, and that reduced their frustration to some degree, particularly with the new whole language approach being advocated by the state.

Representatives from the textbook publishers helped remove some of the problems in getting delivery of the texts; but in spite of this help, the texts remained a problem because they were new, and teachers had to get familiar with them.

Satisfaction with Curriculum Decision Making

The superintendent expressed satisfaction with the curriculum decision making at the school, but he also looked forward to improving and refining the processes in the future as they related to the district master plan. Similarly, the assistant superintendent expressed satisfaction, but also noted areas for future improvement.

The principal reported much satisfaction with the processes of curriculum decision making, and thought the teachers were also satisfied. The teachers were consistently satisfied with curriculum decision making at the site level in retrospect. There was dissatisfaction expressed by some teachers at the beginning of the study, but those teachers expressed increasing satisfaction over time with most teachers expressing satisfaction by the end of the study. One teacher who consistently expressed satisfaction said:

> I wouldn't change it. I don't have any alternatives. I don't know what I'd do differently in curriculum decisions. At present I think we're doing a pretty good job. It's not

like we're locking teachers out, and saying you have no input at all. I suppose there are better ways of doing it, but I think it would take time - more time than one day after school or one weekend.

Another teacher who consistently expressed satisfaction said:

> I like the fact that teachers have input. We can sit down with instructional leaders and say, 'I think we should emphasize this'. We can have opinions respected and accepted. At least we have a voice.

Two teachers were not satisfied with curriculum decision making at either the beginning or the end of the study. Time was the major source of frustration for them. In the words of one of them:

> We need release time at the beginning of the year to put programs together. We need to do pacing. I would request release time to go through guides and work with grade level peers or specialists to help us prepare the curriculum. Therefore, there would be a cohesiveness in programs through the grades. We need time to better develop programs.

Other sources of frustration were the curriculum impact of the district's position on having multigrade classrooms, offering a balanced curriculum, problems in specific subject areas, and lack of grade level meetings.

Summary and Discussion

There was much activity in curriculum decision making at the formal, institutional, and instructional levels as this new school faculty planned and implemented curricula. The principal and groups of teachers planned for grade levels, and the principal and individual teachers planned and implemented their decisions at the classroom level. The influence of the state frameworks was very strong at all levels of decision making studied; the formal, institutional, and instructional. The influence was manifested in several types of curriculum

decisions: goals and objectives, content, materials and resources, evaluation, and time. Although some activity occurred at the district and even at the site level in relation to each of these curriculum elements, the decisions made involved alignment and implementation of state guidelines rather than consideration of alternatives.

Two elements of curriculum planning, learning activities and teaching strategies, were viewed by all participants as primarily decisions to be made at the institutional and instructional levels. That is, the principal and groups of teachers planning at the institutional level and individual teachers planning for their own classrooms had primary control over these two curriculum elements. Teachers also had considerable control over the distribution of the elements of time and space as they worked within the given parameters of some state-mandated time requirements, school-wide schedules, and the design of the school building and classrooms.

Perceptions regarding evaluation differed considerably, however. Participants at the formal level viewed evaluation largely in terms of test norms and reporting to the community while the principal and teachers viewed it more as formal and informal ways to document student growth as well as evaluating program implementation. Teachers, for example, relied on a number of processes for evaluating student growth - formal ways such as testing and informal ways such as observation, use of past records, informal quizzes, student projects, and student presentations.

Grouping was an element of curriculum planning which

reflected considerable frustration for the teachers as they and the principal learned more about the state frameworks which called for flexible, heterogeneous grouping rather than the traditional ability grouping of students. Over time, this frustration was reduced by the resources available to the teachers and principal through the school district, especially the publisher representatives.

District resource teachers were perceived by most participants as an important resource for curriculum improvement. Teachers particularly valued the resource teachers since they were fresh from the classroom, and viewed as "one of them" - as a fellow teacher who knew the classroom with all of its challenges, promises, and frustrations. Other sources of support for most of the teachers were the principal, publisher representatives, and the experience and professional expertise of the majority of the teachers on the faculty.

Two major barriers were noted by the teachers - lack of time and the delay in getting the textbooks from the publishers as well as a lack of understanding of the new reading and language arts framework. For most teachers, these barriers were reduced over the course of the study as time for curriculum development, although always in short-supply, continued to be available throughout the semester and as the teachers were provided with staff development in reading and language arts and as the textbooks eventually reached the classrooms. For some teachers, however, time remained a source of frustration throughout the study.

Most teachers, the principal, the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction, and the superintendent expressed satisfaction with curriculum decision making for the new school. Although several teachers expressed some dissatisfaction at the beginning of the study (as the new school was opening), most of them expressed satisfaction at the exit interview when the fruits of their labor were beginning to be visible. Only two teachers continued to express dissatisfaction throughout the study. As noted above, time for planning was a major source of frustration for both of them.

Curriculum development at this new school was a major concern, and dominated the faculty meetings and the work of all teachers included in the study. It also received much emphasis at the district level with considerable financial resources given to support the efforts and needs of the principal and teachers as they planned the curricula. There was a strong and effective effort to make the institutional curriculum consistent with the state and district expectations.

The shared view of curriculum was the traditional subject-matter dominated curriculum, and that view was strongly believed in, supported, and unquestioned. Much thought and effort was expended to make the subject matter curriculum as efficient and effective as possible. The participants accepted the state frameworks as givens along with the goals and objectives, content, materials, and evaluation within them as guidelines - perhaps even standards - within which their curriculum development needed to occur. Although some of the teachers reported they felt some flexibility in regards to the state

curriculum expectations, this was not a strong theme, and it was sometimes contradicted by other perceptions shared. This approach to curriculum and the shared vision was effective at the school site level in terms of teacher satisfaction, and could reasonably be expected to be effective in student achievement as reflected in higher test scores. The latter, of course will have to be determined when the results of their curriculum decision making have been in place long enough.

Within this view of curriculum the teachers operated more as curriculum technicians than as executive decision makers as the literature is beginning to define the role of the teacher (see for example Griffin, in press). Although these teachers were empowered to make some fundamental curriculum decisions and expressed satisfaction with their current role in it, they seemed to have quite limited control over most of the nine elements of curriculum decision making. It must be questioned how much control teachers actually have over curriculum decision making when the state dominates so powerfully the elements of goals and objectives, content, materials, evaluation, and time. That control severely limits the degrees of freedom teachers actually have over those normally reserved for instructional decision making such as learning activities and teaching strategies.

Subject matter or content in the state framework or the textbook determined the curriculum. Only at the institutional and instructional level were the needs and interests of the students an expressed focus for curriculum development. That focus even then tended to be one of determining what was needed

in order to make the subject matter curriculum more meaningful and effective for the students rather than to adapt or even ignore the state curriculum in response to the needs and interests of the students.

Given this role in curriculum decision making, one must question the degree to which these teachers were empowered in relation to curriculum decision making. They were restricted to decisions about only some of the curriculum elements; they were only somewhat involved in selecting their curriculum materials; and they seemed to willingly accept the role of the administration in spending the money available for curriculum development. Although the teachers were very involved in some aspects of curriculum decision making, it would be difficult to conclude that they were significantly empowered. The dominance and acceptance of the state's role and the district's reinforcement of it precluded much teacher empowerment over curriculum decision making.

The shift in the state reading and language arts curriculum to a whole language approach was a source of considerable frustration for the staff. The teachers realized they did not understand the shift and needed help in working within that perspective. The whole language approach was indeed a significant shift and required changes in curriculum design and practice. Some of the decisions made within traditional subject matter design are inappropriate for a whole language approach. One textbook per child, direct instruction by the teacher, and testing for factual information are examples of curriculum decisions that would be incompatible with the whole language

approach. The teachers recognized that they needed help, and eventually received some from the publisher representatives in making the shift to the new design. It is interesting to note that the curriculum element of grouping seemed to be the factor that precipitated the need for help with a new design.

It is highly likely that the principal and teachers will continue to need help with planning and implementing new designs as they are reflected in state requirements and in the curriculum literature. Unless they are provided with such help, their students are not likely to become effective problem solvers, develop healthy self-concepts, become more creative individuals, or be committed to participation in democratic processes as citizens. These types of curriculum outcomes which are perennially stated in state and district curriculum documents will require new curriculum designs and practices if students are to achieve them.

If site-based decision making is to become a way to empower teachers and increase the effectiveness of the local school in providing an education for its students, the faculty must have the necessary skills in curriculum development. Administrators and teachers must understand alternative curriculum designs (Klein, 1986), develop classroom procedures in keeping with changing state expectations and new approaches, and be able to communicate the new approaches and techniques to novice teachers, parents, and the community. Unless the faculty at the institutional level has the necessary skills in curriculum development and the resources needed such as time and materials

for stimulating their thinking, there is likely to be little real change from the traditional curriculum students currently experience at a school. Without further work in curriculum design and development for both administrators and teachers, the array of goals and expectations that students are expected to achieve will not occur. Teacher empowerment and site-based curriculum development, along with all of their promises and potential problems, will remain elusive goals with little chance of becoming realities.

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